

FROM FIRESIDE TO FACTORY

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BY

META STERN LILIENTHAL

(Translator of Bebel's "Woman")

Author of
WOMEN OF THE FUTURE

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all together form a sort of composite picture of our great-grandmothers of colonial days. The woman who, within her own home, made whatever her family required for immediate consumption, was the typical woman prior to our modern, industrial era. The spinning-wheel, at which she so faithfully toiled, may be rightfully regarded as the symbol of that period when practically all commodities were the product of domestic manufacture.

COLONIAL AMERICA

In order to understand the woman of colonial times, her life and work and her relation to the society of her day, we must briefly examine that society itself. America, prior to the Revolutionary War, was very different from the America of our day. It was an agricultural country, sparsely populated, with immense tracts of uncultivated and uninhabited land, with isolated farms scattered over wide areas, and with few cities, and those few far apart. What is now Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee was then the far western frontier, the undisputed realm of the Indian, and there were not as many white inhabitants in the whole country as there are to-day in one of our big cities. It is difficult for a modern city dweller to picture one of the early American cities. There were only six—Boston, Salem, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Charleston—that could be called cities at all, and of these Philadelphia, at that time the largest, had about 20,000 inhabitants. In regard to comfort, cleanliness and sanitation, those cities of the eighteenth century could not be compared with the humblest mountain village of to-day. The streets were all unpaved. The citizens had to go about their business through dust like the sands of the desert or through mud, ankle-deep. There were no sewers and there was no garbage removal. Each household piled its refuse in the back-yard, and there was no limitation to the size of the garbage heap, except that which was set by the natural scavengers of the communities. These natural scavengers were the domestic hogs in the North and the carrion crows in the South. The modern mind can readily imagine how much disease was bred through this utter disregard of the laws of hygiene. Epidemics, particularly of small-

pox, occurred with appalling frequency, and even when there was no epidemic the death-rate was immense. This high death-rate had to be offset by a high birth-rate, and that was one reason for the large families of colonial days. The eighteenth century cities had no water supply either, and no illumination of the streets at night. There was the well on the market place to which the women came several times each day to fill their pails and buckets, and as for illumination, there was no need for it, since a respectable citizen had no business on the streets at night. In some of the wealthier sections one might now and then find a lamp strung up between two opposite houses, but such extravagance was rare. As a rule, the city was in utter darkness when there was no moon in the sky. Should some stranger have wandered about after night-fall, he would not have been likely to meet anyone but the night-watchman, with his lantern and horn, calling out the hours and the state of weather, and if it was after nine o'clock the night-watchman would surely have stopped him to ask his name and to demand what business he had on the street.

Communication between the different cities was exceedingly slow and difficult. The stage-coach and the sail-boat were the only means of transportation. Travelling by water was considered safer, but the time of arrival was always uncertain, since sail-boats and the wind could not be controlled by any time-table. Travelling by land was a difficult undertaking. The stage-coaches were slow, clumsy and uncomfortable. The roads over which they had to go were always in a wretched condition. After heavy rains or snow-storms, it frequently happened that the passengers all had to get out and pry the stage out of the mud with fence-rails. There were regular stage-lines, running once a week, between New York and Philadelphia, and between New York and Boston. The trip from New York to Philadelphia took three days. In 1766 an enterprising individual established a stage-line that made the trip in two days, and proudly called his stage the Flying Machine. That was 150 years before the dream of a real flying machine was materialized. Some travelling was done on horse-back and the mails were carried on horseback also. But to write a letter was not a common, every-day

occurrence. First the letter had to be penned with a goose-quill, and then it cost about 25 cents to reach its destination. As letters were usually not prepaid, the recipient of the message had to defray the expense, and so people were not anxious to have their friends write to them often.

To complete the picture of our country during colonial days, we must turn from the cities to the farms. Farming was the main pursuit of the great majority of the male population. The budding young nation was essentially an agricultural one. The farms were often situated far apart and their isolation deprived their residents of even those slight comforts and conveniences that city dwellers enjoyed. It, therefore, was necessary for each farm to be entirely self-supporting, for each family to produce whatever they consumed. During the early period of settlement, women had often helped to build the rough log-cabins that became the first homesteads of their families. They had helped to manufacture the crude furnishings. They had even helped—most male occupation of all—to guard their homes, by armed force, against the attacks of the Indians. But when settled conditions prevailed, there was a clearly defined division of labor along sex lines. We must therefore look to the American farm of colonial days to obtain a true and vivid picture of man's work and woman's work before the rise of modern industry.

COLONIAL WOMEN AND THEIR WORK

Broadly speaking, it may be said that man's work was chiefly the production of raw material, while woman's work was chiefly the transforming of raw material into commodities. All food products, also much of the material used for the manufacture of clothing, were grown on the home farm. The man supplied these natural products. The woman transformed them into articles of food and wearing apparel. Consider, for example, the manufacture of linen cloth: Men planted and raised the crops of flax and did the breaking and heckling. Women then took the raw material and proceeded to card, spin, weave, bleach and dye, and finally to cut and sew the cloth into articles of clothing and household linens. In the same way, men raised and sheared the sheep. Women trans-

formed the wool into cloth. Men grew wheat and rye and ground it in windmills or water-mills. Women baked it into bread. Men raised vegetables and fruit. Women did the cooking, pickling and preserving. All along the line of household manufacture the same division of labor along sex lines may be observed. Of course, men were engaged in the making of commodities to some extent also. Thus, in the early pioneer days, before there was a village blacksmith, cobbler and carpenter, every farmer had to be his own blacksmith, cobbler and carpenter, and in many homes the furniture and most of the household utensils were manufactured by the men and boys of the family, particularly during the winter months, when there was no work to be done on the farm. On the other hand, women were also engaged to some extent in the production of raw material. Every good housewife had her little kitchen garden, where she raised the vegetables for her family table. The raising of poultry and the care of cattle was frequently left to the women. In the South, women, particularly slave women, gathered the cotton and performed the slow, laborious task of plucking the seed from the fiber. But—with very few exceptions—women were engaged in the production of raw material only when such material was used by themselves in their own households. Women had little or no share in the making of things that were not used in the home.

HOUSEKEEPING

The colonial woman was essentially—indeed, we may almost say exclusively—a housekeeper. All our traditions about the home being woman's sphere are a mental remnant of those days when the home actually was woman's sphere, when every woman was so intensely and usefully occupied within the home that she had neither time, interest nor energy left for anything outside of her four walls. Housekeeping, in the time of our great-grandmothers, meant something very different from modern housekeeping. It meant productive labor. It meant the learning and practicing of more than one trade. It meant an important share of the world's work. The difference between former and present-day housekeeping becomes evi-

cheerfully lighted room. The colonial housekeeper often contented herself with sitting by the fire in a room lighted only by the red glow from the hearth. But if she had work to do or wished to read, she would light a candle. This candle, again, was the product of her own handicraft. Every home was supplied with large pots for candle-making and with candle-molds, and to manufacture candles of beef-tallow was part of the regular household routine. Only rich households owned lamps filled with lard oil or sperm oil, but even in these the lamps were only lit upon special occasions, owing to the cost of oil.

The difference between modern housekeeping and colonial housekeeping appears more striking still when we consider the subject of clothes. The modern woman rightly considers herself very skillful if she is able to make her own dresses and trim her own hats. For unless she is very skillful, she may learn that it is better and cheaper in the end to buy her clothes ready-made. The colonial woman had to make all her own and her children's clothes and often those of her husband as well, and before she could begin to cut and sew the garments she had to produce the material; she had to spin the yarn and weave and dye the cloth that was to be turned into suits and dresses. If the modern woman chooses to make her own clothes, it is because she has the time, inclination and ability to do so, but not because she has to. For to-day every article of clothing is produced outside the home, and if every woman would refrain from making clothes for herself and her family, the world would still be clothed. But it was not so in colonial days. If the old-time housekeeper had refused to spin and weave, to cut and sew, her family would have had no clothes. In the same way they would have had no food if she had refused to cook, pickle, preserve, milk, churn, bake and brew. Industry was a domestic function and rested mainly in the hands of women. The colonial housekeeper was not only a consumer, but also a producer. She was not supported, in the modern sense of the word, but helped to support the family and—indirectly—to support society, by her productive labor.

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ciety, being a middle class or upper class housekeeper means something entirely different from being a house-keeper in a farmer's cottage or a workingman's flat. On the one hand we have the woman whose housekeeping means actual, domestic labor: cooking, washing, scrubbing, etc. On the other hand, we have the woman whose housekeeping consists exclusively of directing the work of one or more other women, and who may be utterly unable to do the work herself. But in colonial days every woman, regardless of social status or wealth, was industrially employed within her home. The wealthy colonial dames of New York and Boston, the wives of Southern planters, in their stately mansions, had their domestic servants and their slaves; but that did not exempt them from spinning the yarn and weaving the cloth and plying the needle and performing many other household tasks. Even the wealthiest women were proud of their skill in domestic labors, proud of the fine household linens they had accumulated through long years of toil, proud of the beautiful embroideries that decorated their parlors, proud—last but not least—of their culinary art. When a colonial mistress of the house entertained guests, she had to spend much time in the kitchen before receiving her guests in the parlor; for, with the aid of her daughters and servants, she was obliged to prepare everything in connection with the meal that was served. No kind of work pertaining to the duties of a housekeeper was regarded as being beneath any woman's dignity. There was a general approval of industry and thrift. The severe ethics of the Puritans especially were relentless in their condemnation of idleness as the source of all sins. The fair maidens of Boston gave public proof of their diligence and skill by holding spinning matches out upon the Boston Common, and Martha Washington, mother of our country, was so industrious that she was known to ply her busy knitting needles even while entertaining guests. All the mothers of the country, who were Martha Washington's contemporaries, spent much time in plying the knitting needles, for all the colonists—men, women and children—wore home-made stockings and socks, and women exclusively supplied this important article of clothing.

Thus we find that under the domestic system of produc-

tion women were always and everywhere actively engaged in the manufacture of commodities, and that the making of all articles of food and the manufacture of wearing apparel was their special domain. In 1791 Alexander Hamilton, in a report to Congress on manufactures, stated that in various districts two-thirds, three-fourths, and even four-fifths of all the clothing worn by the inhabitants were made by themselves. It is self-evident that girls, brought up in such industrious households, received a thorough industrial training from their early childhood on. Without ever leaving their homes, they learned to master several processes of manufacture, and were adequately prepared for the only profession they were supposed to choose: marriage and housekeeping.

DOMESTIC SERVICE

So far I have discussed the productive labor of colonial women only, inasmuch as such labor was performed in their own homes and in service of their own families. But there always were some women in each community who were obliged to earn their own bread; some women who were wage-workers, long before the rise of modern industry. It, therefore, is necessary to examine the avenues of employment open to these early wage-workers and the conditions affecting their toil.

During the early colonial period we find practically no women gainfully employed except in domestic service. There were three classes of domestic servants. On the lowest scale were the slave-women, bought and sold, owned body and soul, worked like beasts, beaten and abused, as was the privilege of slave-owners under that terrible institution. Only second to slavery was that other, now almost forgotten, institution of the indentured servant. These indentured servants, both men and women, were white people, and their servitude differed from that of the colored slaves inasmuch as it was only temporary. Most of them were persons who had committed some crime in the mother country and were punished by servitude in place of imprisonment. For England, eager to get rid of her criminals, shipped many of them to the American colonies and hired them out to the colonists for a term of

years. Of course this system led to the worst abuses, and it frequently happened that young boys and girls were kidnapped and sold into servitude. Orphaned children and neglected children of profligate parents, too, were bound out—as they called it—to live and serve in some respectable home, boys until the age of twenty, girls until the age of eighteen or until marriage. This was another form of servitude very close to slavery. There were some indentured servants who willingly entered upon their temporary bondage, poor persons who agreed to serve for a fixed term in return for transportation to America, but they were not numerous. The third class of domestic servants were the free help, the only real wage-workers in this occupation, and it is they with whom we have to concern ourselves.

The domestic servants of the colonial period were very much in the same position as the housewives themselves. At a time when the home was considered the only proper place for a woman to be in, unattached women, who had no homes of their own, naturally sought the shelter of other people's homes, and if they had neither relatives nor close friends they sought the homes of strangers, where they could earn their bread in return for domestic service. But at that time domestic service, like housekeeping, meant much more than it does at present. The domestic servant had to be skilled at a number of domestic trades to make her employment profitable, and the manufacture of household commodities constituted a large portion of her work. If a housewife was in a position to engage help, she desired such help not only at the wash tub and the oven, but also, and often particularly, at the spinning-wheel and the loom. In the early newspapers there sometimes appeared advertisements for domestic servants, with the added qualification that they must be good spinners or skilled in weaving, and sometimes they were even required to be good tailoresses. Many domestic servants, particularly those who were widows, went out to work by the day, but the majority lived in the homes of their employers. In either case the wages of these early workers were very low. Old records show domestic servants to have received from fifty cents to one dollar per week and board, or board and lodging and from fifteen to thirty dollars per year. These

colonial servants who had to be skilled in various manufacturing processes, as well as in those occupations that we consider housework to-day, undoubtedly worked much harder and probably worked longer hours, too, than the cook or maid or waitress or general houseworker of the present time; but their social position was a far better one. Instead of working alone, in the isolation of a cheerless kitchen, they worked in the family group, side by side with their employer; they usually ate at the family table, and were treated as members of the household. If their work was hard and long, they at least did not have to toil alone in the presence of wanton idleness, for the matron and the daughters of the family set an example of industry and thrift.

OTHER OCCUPATIONS

One of the earliest remunerative employments for women, beside domestic service, was the keeping of taverns or inns. Licenses to keep inns were frequently granted to women in the colonies, but—this is noteworthy—only to wives or widows, never to spinsters. Unmarried women were the most unfortunate when it came to the necessity of earning a living. Everywhere special barriers were erected against them, and still they were expected to be virtuous and useful. Thus the Salem colony, having at first given small allotments of land to unmarried women, soon discontinued this custom, on the ground that it was a bad precedent "to keep house alone." The Puritan fathers seem to have taken for granted that some women were unmarried out of sheer wickedness and ill-will toward the community.

The keeping of small shops was also resorted to by women at an early date. The New Haven Colonial Records tell of a woman shop-keeper during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Many women took up the lady-like, but highly unremunerative occupation of teaching a "Dame's School." This was at a time when girls were not admitted to the public schools.

It is an interesting fact, and one not generally known, that printing was one of the early remunerative occupa-

tions of women. There were a number of women printers in the eighteenth century, working both as compositors and at the press, and some women even published newspapers. This employment of women in a trade that was regarded as man's work may be accounted for by the fact that printing, like shoemaking, harness making and other trades, was done in a small shop, usually adjoining the home. There was no large, heavy machinery, requiring the erection of special buildings, nor was there any division and organization of labor, necessitating the employment of many workers. The printer of a newspaper was generally also the publisher, editor and owner, and if his financial circumstances did not warrant the employment of paid helpers, he taught the members of his family the art of type-setting and printing. In this way many wives and daughters became skilled compositors and printers, and some even capable editors, and when their male bread-winner died they were able to continue his business.

But all the above-mentioned gainful occupations were of minor importance. For the most part remunerative work resorted to by women during the colonial period was such that could be performed in their own homes and in connection with their other household tasks. Thus many women, skilled in gardening, raised garden seeds or vegetables and fruit for sale. Others made preserves and wine and sold them to their neighbors, or exchanged them at the village store for commodities they could not make; for much trading in those days was done by barter, particularly in the rural communities. But the greatest number of women were employed in the making of wearing apparel, from the spinning of the yarn to the sewing of the finished article. Edith Abbott, in her valuable book, "Women in Industry," enumerates spinning, weaving, the knitting of stockings and mittens, the manufacture of men's shirts and pants, etc., among the early, remunerative employments of women. Women turned to the same kinds of work for the purpose of gain, that they were accustomed to perform for the maintenance of their own homesteads. In most instances, therefore, the remunerative work of women did not differ from their work as housekeepers. Whether a woman spun and wove her own household linens, or whether she spun and wove articles for sale,

whether she made shirts and pants for her own husband and sons or whether she made them to be traded to the Indians, in either case she performed her work in her own or in some other person's home, surrounded by her own or by her employer's family. The home was the workshop and the family was the working group. The conditions under which these early women workers plied their trades were the conditions of home and family life. Sometimes these domestic work-shops were quite extensive. In some households one could find the mother and her daughters and one or more hired women, all weaving cloth for sale. In the winter months, when the men of the family were released from labor in the fields, they, too, would help at the loom, and thus the entire household, by their combined efforts, could produce a considerable quantity of cloth. Now and then new looms were bought with the proceeds of the sales, and so the domestic work-shop was gradually enlarged and extended. Some families succeeded in manufacturing such large quantities of cloth or linen that the supply exceeded the demand in their immediate neighborhood, and their products were sent out in sailing vessels that carried fish to other ports.

Although men, as we have seen, sometimes participated in this domestic industry, it was mainly the work of women. The making of commodities, particularly of food and clothing, was woman's domain, her undisputed task, the very purpose of her life in the economic scheme of society. But although the colonial woman was essentially and always a producer, and although her productive work was often gainful in character, she was not an independent wage-worker in the modern sense of the word. Not the individual, but the family, was the economic unit, and the husband and father, as recognized head of the family, disposed of the earnings of the women. Married women and their unmarried daughters often worked away for years without ever controlling one cent of the money earned by their toil. By law and by the sanction of public opinion, the husband owned the wife's earnings, as well as all property given or bequeathed to her. But as the vast majority of women enjoyed the shelter of the home in one way or another, as they were clothed, housed and fed in return for their productive, domestic labor, and as

they could make at home practically everything to supply their personal wants, there was no crying need for the economic independence of women, as there is in our day. Only widows and spinsters enjoyed some degree of economic independence; but their independence was often gained under such hard, unfavorable conditions that they were more to be pitied than envied.

EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN

There were, of course, as there have always been, some women who were exceptions to the rule; some women who were so favored by rare ability or by unusual opportunities that they achieved not only true economic independence, but even wealth and power. There were others whose names have gone down in history as the originators of new industries, that later became important factors in the industrial history of the nation. Our picture of the American woman during the period of domestic industry would be incomplete, if we did not at least briefly examine the lives and labors of some of these exceptional women.

In the early days of the colonies, away back in the first half of the seventeenth century, there lived in the Maryland colony a remarkable woman called Margaret Brent. She came over with a handful of colonists and settled in the wilderness, performing all the hard, dangerous work of the early settlers. She was gifted with a rare business and executive ability, and soon managed all the affairs for her family, signing herself "attorney for my brother." When the governor of Maryland died he made Margaret Brent his sole executrix, and she managed his estate so well that the assembly of the colony saw fit to bestow public praise upon her. Two hundred years before the first woman's rights' convention, this remarkable woman demanded for herself voice and vote in the government of the colony she had helped to build up. Her demand was, of course, refused on the ground of her sex, but she will always be remembered as the first American suffragist.

In the New England colonies and in New York a number of women were actively engaged in commercial enterprises. Most of them were the widows of successful mer-

chants, having sufficient energy and ability to carry on their husbands' trades. Mrs. Grant, a New England woman, took up her husband's business when he was killed in an accident, and carried it on successfully, despite envious opposition. At one time, when a large sum of money was owed her for which she had sued, she found that her counsel was deceiving her and was really acting for her opponent. So she went into the court-room and, with the judge's permission, argued her own case so well that the jury promptly rendered a verdict in her favor.

In New York, then New Amsterdam, two famous widows, Mrs. De Vries and Mrs. Provoost, successfully continued their husbands' foreign trades, and Martha Smith, a widow living on Long Island, ably conducted a fishery. In 1707 she was reported as having paid 15 pounds and 15 shillings to the authorities in New York as taxes on her income.

There even were a few colonial women engaged in intellectual work, although there were practically no educational opportunities for women in those days. Jane Colden, the daughter of Governor Colden of New York, was an able botanist. She described hundreds of American plants according to the system of Lynnaeus, and made beautiful and accurate drawings of the plants she described. At one time the attention of Lynnaeus himself was called to this American woman botanist. It is amusing and characteristic of the conception of womanliness prevailing at that time, that the letter setting forth Jane Colden's ability and scientific knowledge was followed by a postscript which read: "She makes the best cheese I ever ate in America." The writer evidently thought that so much manly knowledge in a woman had to be offset by a truly feminine ability.

Mrs. Martha Logan was a successful gardener and was also the author of a treatise on gardening. But as public opinion did not approve of women writers, Mrs. Logan kept her book a secret and it was not published until after her death.

Three American industries were originated by women: the silk industry, the manufacture of straw goods and the

culture of indigo. To Mrs. Pinkney, Grace Fisher and Suzanna Wright belongs the credit of having made the first silk manufactured on American soil. King James I had sent over some silk-worm cocoons for experiments in the colonies, and these three women succeeded in raising the silk-worms and in spinning and weaving silk of such fine quality that it was used for the garments of English royalty. A mere slip of a girl, Betsey Metcalf, living at Dedham, Mass., was the first to manufacture straw hats in this country. In 1789 she invented a method of bleaching and braiding the meadow grass that grew around her native town, and her bonnets soon became so popular that many women from neighboring towns and villages came to learn her art. Thus the foundation for a flourishing industry was laid, and making straw hats soon became an important remunerative occupation for women. Eliza Lucas Pinkney, one of the three women who manufactured the first American silk, also established the culture of indigo. By untiring efforts and experiments she succeeded in raising the indigo plant and in manufacturing indigo dye that later became an important article of exportation. Indigo was one of the chief agricultural products of our South until it was replaced by the more profitable cultivation of cotton.

During the Revolutionary War, when military service took the men away from their homes, and when many were killed or crippled in battle, stern, economic necessity drove greater numbers of women into the business world, and compelled them to take the places vacated by the men of their families. One of the business women of Revolutionary days was the mother of Thomas Perkins, of Salem, who inherited his mother's business ability and became one of the great American merchants of the early nineteenth century. Helen Campbell, in "Women Wage Earners," tells us that Mrs. Perkins, left widowed in 1778, "took her husband's place in the counting-house, managed business, despatched ships, sold merchandise, wrote letters, all with such commanding energy that the stolid Hollanders wrote to her as to a man." In the South many women managed large farms and plantations while the men were away at war. Among these was Abigail Adams, **the wife of the second President of the United States,**

WOMAN'S PLACE

We see then that even in colonial days there were a number of women who overstepped the narrow limits of the home, who performed tasks and achieved results that were regarded as being within the province of man. But as the exception always proves the rule, so these exceptional women only emphasize the fact that during the period of domestic industry the woman's place was home. The colonial home was the work-shop of colonial society. It was the place where the most essential necessities of life were produced, and women were the producers of these necessities. In every home at least one woman—usually several—was engaged in socially necessary labor. In every home women were performing their full share of the world's work. There was no need for women to seek employment outside the home, because there was a superabundance of work to be done within. There was no economic necessity that impelled women to compete with men in those occupations traditionally regarded as man's work, because woman's field of work was so large and so important that it required the services of all women.

Whether a woman labored only to supply the needs of her own family, or whether she labored for gain, the nature of her work remained the same and the place in which she labored remained the home. Since our minds are always strongly influenced by the kind of work we do and the way in which we do it, woman's mind was shaped and moulded by the constant home environment. Her thoughts, her ideas, her feelings, her entire outlook upon life, were essentially domestic. To the man who always observed mother, sister, wife and daughter diligently and usefully toiling in domestic seclusion, who always saw the woman at home and always needed her at home, it seemed as natural, as self-evident that woman must be at home and nowhere else, as that a tree must be rooted in the ground.

This generally accepted position of women, unchanged until a century ago, still determines the opinion of those who continue to assert that women should confine their interests and their activities to the home, without observing that the home has changed even more than

the women. For our sluggish brains do not keep pace with social evolution. We often cling to traditions and are blind to facts. We uphold and proclaim what has once been useful long after its usefulness has ceased. While manufacture was almost exclusively a domestic function and was mainly in the hands of women, while society depended for its commodities upon the thrift and skill of its women within their homes, it was only natural that the home should be regarded as woman's sphere, and that the assumption, a woman's only place is home, should become deeply rooted in the ethical conceptions of mankind. It must be remembered that woman was immured within the four walls of home during almost the entire history of civilization. In the heroic age of Greece we find the women spinning and weaving in their homes, while the men produced a philosophy, a literature, an art at which we still marvel to-day. We find the Roman maids and matrons spinning and weaving in the Roman houses, while the men made Rome mistress of the world. All through the Middle Ages, in every European country, we find the women spinning and weaving in separate chambers, sometimes even in separate buildings set aside for their use, while men were engaged in terrible religious and political struggles from which modern Europe gradually evolved, and we still find women spinning and weaving at the colonial fireside in the new world, up to the dawn of the nineteenth century, while men established a republic and founded a nation.

It has been woman's lot through the ages to perform the quiet, unostentatious, but exceedingly necessary work of clothing and feeding the world. This work has always and everywhere been performed within the shelter of the home. Is it to be wondered at, that the conceptions, home and woman, became inseparably linked? From this fundamental idea that the woman's only place is home, all our other traditional ideas concerning women have sprung. The idea of woman's supposed weakness and dependence, her supposed mental inferiority, her supposed unfitness for the larger duties and responsibilities of public life, are all the results of her age-long seclusion in the home.

The great industrial revolution that marked the close

of the eighteenth and the rise of the nineteenth century has completely transformed the position of women. It has also obliterated the distinction between man's work and woman's work. It has socialized industry; it has made man woman's co-worker in the task of clothing and feeding the world, and it has extended woman's sphere to the full length and breadth of human work. The industrial revolution, by bringing women out of the home into the world, has wrought a transformation in every phase of woman's life. It was the universal, fundamental cause of woman's unrest and woman's awakening. The machine, though enslaving millions of individual women, still was the liberator of womanhood. The factory door, though signifying hopeless drudgery in countless individual lives, nevertheless meant for woman the open gate-way to freedom.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

During the early eighteenth century there were only a few establishments in this whole country that might be called factories. There were some flour and lumber mills driven by wind and water power, some paper mills, a very few iron foundries, and a few printing shops. The making of wearing apparel, that constitutes such an important factor in American manufactures of the present day, was still entirely and exclusively a domestic function. Everything a man wore was made in his own or some other home, from the straw-hat made of meadow grass, picked dried, bleached and braided by women of his family or of his neighborhood, to the socks knitted by his wife or mother, and the shoes made by the village cobbler in his little domestic shop. In all New England, industrially so important to-day, there was not one single manufacturing town. It was during the second half of the eighteenth century that the industrial revolution set in, first in the mother country, England, and later in America.

When speaking of historical epochs it can never be said that they began at any definite time or place. The changes were always slow and gradual, and usually people were in the midst of them before they were recognized at all. Undoubtedly countless social and economic causes and

many minor discoveries and inventions led up to that great change in the methods of production from the manual tool to the machine, from the domestic work-shop to the factory. But looking back upon the course of events to-day, with minor factors obliterated and important ones standing out forcibly and clearly, we may say—broadly speaking—that the industrial revolution dates from the invention of Watt's steam engine in 1769. Before this great invention, England had already witnessed many and varied improvements in the processes of manufacture, particularly in the textile industry, such as the invention of machines for carding and spinning and other notable improvements on the old methods of manufacture by hand. But the application of steam-power, as introduced by Watt, made possible that manufacture on a large scale that led to the building of factories, to the rapid growth of the English factory towns, and to the coming into existence of a large and steadily increasing class of male and female wage-workers. When the factory system, with its concomitant woman and child wage labor, and with all the crying evils of its early history, was already fully established in England, industry was still carried on under the old domestic system in the American colonies. This was due to the fact that England—eager to become mistress of the world in industry, as she was mistress of the world in discovery and conquest—jealously guarded her inventions, her machinery and her skilled artisans. The exportation of machinery was forbidden, and so was the emigration of persons who knew how to operate the machines and were acquainted with their construction. But England's prohibitory laws had the effect of making the American colonists doubly eager to develop and promote their own industries, and so we find manufacturing establishments coming into existence here and there, even before any of the improved machinery was introduced that was already in use in England.

These early factories—"manufactories" they were called—differed considerably from what we should call factories to-day. They marked the period of transition from the old domestic system to the true modern factory system. For the most part they were merely large rooms, rarely entire buildings, where a number of looms were brought

together and where a place of business was maintained for the purchase of the raw material and for the sale of the finished product. Most of the spinners and weavers were still employed at home and only called at the "manufactory" to get the cotton and deliver the yarn, or to get the yarn and deliver the cloth, as the case might be. It seems perfectly natural, it does not surprise us in the least, that the persons so employed were women. We have seen that all through the colonial period women who were able to spin more yarn or weave more cloth than their household needs required, sold or bartered their products. So what was more natural than that women should now sell their products to the "manufactories" that gave a new impetus to their skill? The advertisement, "weaving given out," that frequently appeared in newspapers of that period, caused no unfavorable comment; on the contrary. The early manufacturers were praised for giving employment to poor women—unfortunately also to children—who would otherwise have been a burden to the community. Societies for encouraging manufactures were formed, and spinning schools were established for the purpose of teaching women and children of poor families to become self-supporting and to develop the industries of the country. In 1787 it was reported that the "Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures" employed from two to three hundred women at spinning linen yarn, and there were other similar companies in New York and in New England. Some of these early factories employed a number of women on the premises, but they still were the exceptions. The rule was that the women worked for the manufacturers without leaving their own homes. So woman was becoming a social producer, even while she still worked at home, by the aid of her old, manual tools.

Another invention, only second in importance to Watt's steam engine, marks the rise of the true factory system in America: the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. Prior to the Revolutionary War, tobacco, rice and indigo had been the chief agricultural products of our South. Cotton was grown only in small quantities, mainly as a home product for home consumption. Women gathered it when ripe, plucked the seeds from the fiber, and prepared it for

spinning. As all this had to be done by hand, it was a slow, laborious task. To pick the seed from one pound of cotton was generally considered a good day's work. When the manufacture of cotton-cloth on a larger scale began, greater quantities of cotton were raised, but the difficulty and expense of preparing the cotton for the market prevented it from becoming a very profitable article. Then came the cotton gin and with it a revolution in the industrial conditions of the whole country that was as rapid as it was complete. In the South this great invention drove all other products from the field and made cotton king. It also instilled new life into the almost decayed institution of slavery, by making slave labor tremendously valuable to the owners of cotton plantations. In the North it gave a strong incentive to the manufacture of cotton goods, it led to the establishment of factories on a large scale, and it was the immediate cause of that great transition of women from the home to the factory, which marks the beginning of the modern woman movement. With the aid of the cotton gin three hundred-weight of cotton could be prepared in the same time that it had formerly taken to prepare one pound. Just before the invention of the cotton gin 100,000 pounds of cotton were exported to Europe. Two years after its invention 6,000,000 pounds were sent out of the country.

Eli Whitney is the man whose name has always been associated with the cotton gin, but some modern historians claim this great invention to have been the work of a woman, the widow of General Nathaniel Green. In an article on "Women as Inventors," by Mrs. Gage, published some years ago in the North American Review, this claim was made and substantiated and has since been quoted by several modern writers. It is said that Mrs. Green concealed her identity, and allowed young Whitney to get the credit for her invention, because she feared the ridicule of her acquaintances and the loss of her social position. Women were not supposed to have inventive powers. To think and to achieve was unwomanly, and to have given the world a new machine of incalculable, industrial value would have been a disgrace to a lady. Such still was the prevailing conception of woman's place, as late as the last decade of the eighteenth

century. But whether or not it was a woman who transformed the textile industry by inventing the cotton gin, the fact remains that this invention transformed the lives of millions of women by forever removing from the domestic fireside woman's ancient industrial tools: the spinning-wheel and the loom.

Two other inventions, just preceding the cotton gin, helped to establish the textile industries in America: the spinning-jenny and the power-loom. The first spinning-jenny seen in America was exhibited in Philadelphia in 1775 by Tenche Cox, known as the father of American industries. It led to the establishment of spinning mills where hundreds of women found employment, while the yarn was still sent out among farmers' wives, to be woven on their hand-looms in their own homes. The earliest textile factories were all spinning mills. Weaving became a factory occupation only after the introduction of the power-loom, invented in 1785 by Cartwright, but not applied to practical use until 1814. In that year the first power-loom went into operation in Waltham, Mass., in the first real cotton factory that comprised all the processes of cotton manufacture. Massachusetts was particularly adapted by nature to be a manufacturing state, owing to its abundance of swift flowing streams, and here the first factories were erected. But soon the other New England States, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania followed in rapid succession, and by 1830 the textile industries had passed into the factory system. Though other industries still lingered in the home, and though the domestic system and the factory system continued to be interwoven for many years, the old household manufactures steadily decreased and by 1850 were rapidly disappearing. When the first half of the nineteenth century had passed, the factory system in the United States had become fully established. The home had ceased to be the work-shop of the nation.

WOMAN LEAVES HER FIRESIDE

When the old, domestic spinning-wheel had become a mere toy beside the spinning-jenny, when the old-fashioned hand-loom was rendered useless and valueless by

the power-loom, when one time-honored woman's work after another was transferred from the home to the factory, it was only natural and inevitable that woman should follow her work, that she, too, should accomplish the transition from her age-long work-shop, the family home-stead, to the world's new work-shop, equipped with machinery and steam-power, the factory. It must be remembered that the first factories established in this country were all devoted to the textile industries, the very traditional industries of women, and that therefore the first women who went to work in them did not do anything new and startling, did not perform tasks that were unusual for women. They did the same work they had always done, the same work their mothers and grandmothers had done before them; they only did it in a new way. We have seen that when a woman was obliged to become self-supporting under the old, domestic system of industry, she usually entered domestic service. That meant that she went to spin and weave and perform other industrial labors in some other person's home. When industry had been taken out of the home, when the factory system had become established, a woman obliged to be self-supporting no longer went to another person's home. She went to spin or weave in a factory. We have seen that under the domestic system daughters were valuable workers in the family group. They remained at home and helped their mothers to spin and weave, to knit and sew, and when they produced more than the family could consume they carried their products to market. When industry had been taken out of the home there no longer was enough work left to require the presence of several women. If daughters would be of economic value to their families, they had to leave their homes and go to the factories. It is a noteworthy fact that in the early textile factories the percentage of women workers, as compared to men workers, was greater than it is to-day. Women were skilled in that particular line of work, and to tend the machines that replaced their manual tools required no great physical strength. It seemed perfectly natural then that women should spin and weave in factories, as they had spun and woven at home. Another cause that favored the employment of women in factories was the scarcity of male labor

power. Immigration from foreign countries was still slight, and the great majority of native men were successfully employed in agriculture. So the transition of women from home to factory began immediately with the establishment of the factory system.

The earliest available statistics on this subject may be found in a report on cotton manufacture in the United States, published in 1816. This report shows us that the cotton mills at that time employed only 10,000 men, against 66,000 women and female children. In 1831 it was shown that in the garment factories of Boston, out of 17,000 employees, more than 13,000 were women, and in Lowell alone 32 cotton mills employed 5,685 women and only 862 men. The first complete cotton mill at Waltham employed 138 weavers, all of them women, and three young girls whose names have been remembered—Sallie Winters, Mary Healy and Hannah Borden—were the first persons to operate power looms in Fall River. In fact, weaving was regarded as being within the province of women to such an extent that the first men weavers were viewed with amusement and were subjected to ridicule as men performing woman's work. The hue and cry raised during the early days of the woman movement that women were invading occupations traditionally belonging to men, appears ridiculous when we consider how many occupations men have invaded that traditionally belonged to women. The male spinner and weaver were followed by the male cook and baker, the male maker of pickles, jams and preserves, the male soap and candle maker, the male dressmaker and milliner even. As I have already stated, it was the industrial transformation that obliterated the former distinctions between man's work and woman's work. Neither men nor women were to blame for invading each other's occupations, but the inexorable laws of industrial development.

A PIONEER

But let us return to the early days of the factories and to the early women workers! Three young girls, as we have seen, operated the first power looms in Fall River, one of the foremost factory towns of present-day Massa-

chusetts. The story of one of these, Hannah Borden, has been recorded by several contemporary writers. I will briefly repeat it here because it is characteristic of the beginnings of factory labor and of the pioneer factory women. Hannah Borden was born in that period of transition when the first "manufactories" were being established, but when industry was still, in the main, a domestic function. Hannah's parental home was still equipped with those ancient household necessities, a spinning-wheel and a hand-loom, and Hannah learned to operate them at an age at which modern little girls begin to learn their three R's. When she was eight years old she had woven her first yard of cloth on the hand-loom, and by the time she was twelve she was an accomplished weaver. Yet this child worker did not come from the working class. There was no working class in the modern sense before the establishment of the factory system. Hannah's father was, in fact, a well-to-do man, who owned stock in one of the early "manufactories" in his native town, Fall River. When the new inventions began to transform the processes of manufacture, this particular mill at once introduced power-looms, and the stockholder, Mr. Borden, remembering his daughter's skill at weaving, procured a place for Hannah in the mill. So this little pioneer wage-worker, at the age of fourteen, left her old hand-loom, that had become useless, and went to operate the first power-loom in the "manufactory," together with Mary Healy and Sallie Winters. Hannah worked hard and long. Her working day was longer than that of any modern factory worker. She began at sunrise, taking only half an hour for breakfast and another half hour for lunch, and kept on working until seven or half past seven in the evening, weaving by candle light during the winter months. Her wages were higher than the wages of the hired woman had been under the domestic system. While the latter's wage had been from two to three dollars a month and board, Hannah earned from \$2.75 to \$3.25 a week. Though Hannah's hours seem outrageously long and her wages seem outrageously low, measured by modern standards, it must be observed that Hannah and her contemporaries had some striking advantages over modern factory girls. There was no speeding system in Hannah's day. The

intense, constant, nervous strain that marks the modern factory system was absent. Moreover, while the modern weaver has many looms to tend, Hannah operated just one loom and there were no more than twelve looms in the whole factory. But the greatest advantage Hannah and her fellow workers possessed was a social one. Hannah, who had followed her work from the home to the factory, was not looked down upon by the girls who continued to work at home. Her social status remained unchanged. The families of the factory owners were her friends and associates.

This story of Hannah Borden gives us, in a nutshell, the whole story of the transition of women from home to factory. It shows us that women did not voluntarily abandon their old, traditional sphere; that no spirit of restlessness or rebellion caused them to leave their homes; but that they merely followed their work when the invention of machinery and the application of steam power transformed industry from a domestic into a social function. Another interesting fact that the story of Hannah Borden teaches us is that public opinion was not averse to women's leaving their homes in order to perform their old work in the new way. The mill owners were even regarded as public benefactors for giving employment to women who would otherwise have been idle, and Hannah was not snubbed by her well-to-do friends for being a factory girl. Only when women, under economic pressure, began to invade the skilled trades and learned professions that had formerly been the undisputed realm of man, and when men, also under economic pressure, were compelled to compete with women on the industrial field, only then was the cry raised that woman's place is home, and that to seek employment on the broader fields of life is unwomanly.

THE STORY OF LOWELL

Of the many factory towns that sprung up in rapid succession when the factory system had once become established, none is more interesting or conveys a better picture of early factory life than Lowell. I will, therefore, ask the reader to accompany me in mind to Lowell of 1840,

that Lowell described by Whittier as "the wonderful city of spindles and looms and thousands of factory folk," and to whose pioneer women workers the same poet refers as "priestesses of the divinity of labor." Lowell of 1840 was very different from the Lowell of to-day. The streets were planted with trees. Its small houses were surrounded by gardens. Its factories were smaller, less somber-looking buildings than the modern mills and were sometimes adorned with flowers that the working girls themselves raised in boxes before the windows. But far more different than the city itself was the early class of operatives that labored there, the pioneer working girls who made Lowell famous. The modern factory town harbors a heterogeneous population, brought together from many lands and many climes. But the early mill girls were all American, and most of them were country-bred, of healthy, vigorous New England stock. The majority of these girls were brought into the factory town, not by absolute need, but rather by the call of that larger opportunity that the mills offered. For although the doors of the factory were shut upon them for twelve hours each day, still those doors led to economic independence and to a broader, richer life than women had ever known. Therefore the finest kind of girls, girls endowed with that spirit of enterprise and self-reliance that marked their pioneer forefathers, were the first to enter the mills. Among them were daughters of well-to-do farmers, daughters of doctors and lawyers and clergymen, even. The reason why so many girls of culture and refinement were found among the early mill workers is that so few other employments were open to women. If a girl did not wish to become a domestic servant, there was practically only one other alternative beside factory labor—teaching. But this still was such a neglected profession and was so wretchedly paid that it could not be considered a means of self-support at all.

Varied and touching were the reasons given by many of the early mill girls for their going to work. Some wished to use their earnings for lifting a mortgage from the home they loved; others to lighten the burden of aged parents; others still to send ambitious young brothers through college, and not a few to satisfy their own cravings for a higher education. To win and to hold such a class of

employees the early manufacturers had to offer special inducements. This was all the more necessary because the appalling conditions that accompanied the beginnings of factory labor in England had created a great deal of prejudice against factory labor generally. Therefore, in Lowell and elsewhere the corporations that controlled the factories established boarding houses for their female operatives, devised to give an atmosphere of that home life to which the girls had been accustomed, and that they had been obliged to leave behind when they came to the mill town. These boarding houses were under the direction of respectable matrons, usually widows, many of whom had their own daughters at work in the mills. Each house had its parlor, with a piano or an organ and books and periodicals upon the table. Here the girls assembled in the evenings and on Sunday afternoons, read and played and sang, and fostered a spirit of good fellowship that the isolated woman in the home had never known, a spirit from which the larger, social consciousness was destined to spring.

The intellectual life of the early mill girls of Lowell is a phenomenon that will always amaze the student of American conditions. After a twelve-hour work-day in the mills these girls had enough spirit and ambition left to read and study, to attend lectures, and to take a lively interest in the public questions of the day. In Lowell Hall series of lectures were being delivered at that time by college professors and other learned men, and these lectures were chiefly attended by the mill girls. But not contented with simply attending the lectures, the girls afterwards discussed the subjects of the lectures among themselves and some began to put down their opinion in writing. This practice led to two noteworthy achievements: the founding of the Improvement Circle and the publication of the Lowell Offering. Among the thousands of members of the women's clubs, that to-day are spread broadcast over the country, we find very few working women; yet to working women belongs the credit of having organized the first woman's literary club in America. This first literary club, the Improvement Circle of the Lowell mill girls, gave its members an opportunity for intellectual development and expression that was entirely

new to all of them, and some girls who in later life became famous women owed much of their early inspiration and encouragement to that working girls' club. Among the members of the Improvement Circle who later achieved fame were Lucy Larcom, a poetess; Margaret Foley, a sculptress; and Harriet Robinson, an authoress.

The intellectual life of the Improvement Circle led directly to that other remarkable achievement of the Lowell mill girls, the publication of the *Lowell Offering*. This magazine was written, edited and published by the mill girls themselves. "Many of the pieces that were printed there," says Harriet Robinson, "were thought out amid the hum of the wheels, while the skillful fingers and well-trained eyes of the writers tended the loom or the frame." So remarkable were many of these articles that a collection of them was reprinted in England under the title, "Mind Among the Spindles," and Dickens said of them that they "compared favorably with those of many English periodicals." In some of the articles burning questions of the day were discussed. The movement for the abolition of slavery had many enthusiastic adherents among the mill girls and brought forth many expressions in prose and in verse from their pens. Problems that still remain unsolved were also touched upon. Thus Hariot F. Curtis, one of the ablest contributors to the *Lowell Offering* and one of the founders of the Improvement Circle, in a series of articles propounded the theory of equal pay for equal work, years before there was any organized movement for the equal rights of women. The early history of Lowell has been ably and interestingly recorded in "Loom and Spindle" by Harriet H. Robinson, who herself began life as a Lowell mill girl and became a well-known literary woman and a pioneer suffragist. At a woman's convention she once referred to the factory where she had worked as her "alma mater."

This aspect of early Lowell and the other budding factory towns soon changed when the rising tide of immigration began to flood the labor market. While at first the demand for factory hands had exceeded the supply, conditions now were reversed, and the immediate result was a reduction in wages and a general lowering of the standard

of factory labor. The American country girls were replaced in the mills by Irish immigrant women; these again were supplanted by French Canadians, and so on. The type of girls who had welcomed factory labor as a first opportunity for economic independence were compelled, by pressure from below, to seek other avenues of employment, and this led to a gradual, constant extension of woman's field of work.

Until now I have considered the factory labor of women only in the textile industry. I have laid special stress upon this branch of industrial work for three reasons: Firstly, the earliest factories in this country were all devoted to textile manufacture. Secondly, this particular industry was a traditional industry of women, one in which practically all women were employed in their homes before the rise of the factory system. Thirdly, the textile industries still employ the greatest number of women who are at work in factories at the present time. With the constantly expanding realm of woman's work, it is impossible even to touch upon every industry that employs women to-day. I must, therefore, confine myself to a brief examination of a few industries in which the greatest number of women have found employment.

SEWING TRADES

One of the leading industrial occupations of women is generally summed up under the heading, the sewing trades. These comprise the making of men's and women's suits and dresses, coats, hats, shirts, underwear, collars and cuffs, gloves, etc. As we have seen, the making of wearing apparel has always been woman's work. During the domestic period of industry the same hands that spun the thread and wove the cloth also sewed the garments. When spinning and weaving had been taken out of the home and made specialized factory occupations, the making of clothes still remained a domestic occupation because no machinery had as yet been applied to this branch of manufacture. The individual woman's needle, thread and scissors continued to be the only tools employed. Nevertheless this industry, too, was revolutionized in the general transformation from the individual to the social form

of production. While in colonial days every woman had sewed all the clothes for the members of her family, the rise of industry and commerce led to the establishment of the ready-made clothing business, and it was this particular line of development that made women wage-workers in this particular industry. When a young girl who was skillful with the needle could earn more by sewing shirts for a merchant than she could possibly save by making all the clothes for her father and brothers, she naturally ceased to be an individual producer for her family and became a social producer, a wage-worker. Her father and brothers, adapting themselves to the same industrial change, ceased to depend upon their women folk for the making of their clothes and began to buy them ready-made. Division of labor went hand in hand with the change from individual to social production. Where a woman formerly had made all kinds of clothing to meet the requirements of her family, she now specialized on one particular garment, making only shirts or vests or whatever her particular line might be. As early as the latter part of the eighteenth century some women were engaged in the manufacture of ready-made clothing to be traded to the Indians or to be sold to southern planters for their slaves; but it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the industry began to assume important dimensions. Then it developed rapidly and by 1835 had become a flourishing business.

From the beginning the garment trades were centered in the large cities, and from the beginning they were among the most poorly paid of all occupations resorted to by women. We have seen that in the textile trades the early conditions were favorable and the wages comparatively high because the demand for operatives exceeded the supply. No such favorable conditions ever existed in the sewing trades. Every woman knew how to ply a needle, and the coarser kinds of sewing required practically no skill and experience. So the majority of women, obliged to be entirely or partly self-supporting, turned to one or another branch of the sewing trades as a means of earning their livelihood. Women and young girls who were prejudiced against factory labor took up sewing because it could be done at home. Married women and widows, who could not leave

their homes and children, took in sewing to be done in the intervals of their housework, and ladies of aristocratic breeding, reduced to poor circumstances, did needle work at home to earn their pin money or to increase the family income. So the sewing trades have literally always been overcrowded. By 1850 no less than 61,500 women were employed in making men's and boys' clothing; in fact, women constituted 63 per cent. of all the persons employed in this industry.

The invention of the sewing machine tended to still further aggravate the conditions to which the large number of women employed in the sewing trades were subjected. The sewing machine was invented in 1850, but did not come into general use until a few years later, when perfected by the lock stitch. The introduction of the sewing machine meant a tremendous increase in output over the old manual method of production, and as a result made thousands of needle women superfluous. It has been estimated that 70,000 women employed in the sewing trades were displaced by the machine. But the invention of machinery in this line of industry did not have the same immediate result as the invention of machinery in the textile trades. It did not make the sewing of garments a factory occupation. Sewing machines being simple to operate and comparatively cheap, soon were bought by the workers themselves, and so the sewing trades have to a great extent remained a domestic industry, the old home system gradually merging into the modern sweatshop system, one of the greatest industrial evils of our day. The sewing trades were among the first to be invaded by immigrant women, and after the Civil War many Southern women who came North, having been robbed both of their breadwinners and their property, further helped to flood the labor market in this industry, since needlework, done at home, seemed less degrading to them than going to the factory. There was another factor that weighed heavily on the women in this traditional woman's occupation, and that was the invasion of men. Immigrant men invaded the sewing trades at an early date, and this competition of men tended, on the one hand, to still further lower women's wages; on the other, to compel the opening of new occupations to women.

Conditions were perhaps at their worst at about the middle of the last century. In 1845 the New York Tribune estimated that in New York City alone there were 10,000 sewing women. A majority of these worked anywhere from ten to sixteen hours a day to earn from two to three dollars a week. In the squalor and misery of wretched, insanitary tenement homes, women made shirts at six cents a piece. As late as 1870—according to newspapers of the time—out of 70,000 women wage earners in New York City, 20,000 were in a constant fight with starvation, 7,000 lived in cellars. These deplorable conditions could not fail to arouse public attention. Various philanthropic enterprises, such as cheap boarding houses for working women, industrial schools, exchanges for woman's work, etc., came into existence at this time, and early agitators for equal opportunities for women, as Virginia Penny, Gail Hamilton, Catherine Cole and Mathew Carey, helped to arouse the public conscience. The misery of the needlewomen and of other unskilled women workers was a powerful factor in opening to women the skilled trades and learned professions they have since invaded. It acted like a wedge from below, driving those on the top, favored with larger opportunities, to venture upon new fields of employment.

MANUFACTURE OF SHOES

The census of 1900 reported 34,490 women engaged in the manufacture and repairing of boots and shoes; yet shoemaking was traditionally not woman's work but man's. It is one of those industries into which women have been drawn by the invention of machinery and the division of labor. At the time when every woman was occupied at home with the making of garments for her family, shoes were the only article of clothing that she did not make nor even help to make. Each pair of shoes was the product of the skilled labor of one man, a master workman at his trade. The village cobbler either made shoes to order in his own workshop, or he travelled about from farm to farm, making and repairing shoes for the farmers and their families. When the population increased and with it the demand for shoes, the master workmen

began to hire apprentices and journeymen to help them in their work, and from this practice evolved what was called the team system. Instead of each cobbler turning out a complete pair of shoes, the men who worked together divided the work between them, each performing only one given part in the process of manufacture. It was at this point—when a division of labor had been established in the making of shoes—that women came into the industry. The village cobbler soon discovered that women could be profitably employed in stitching the uppers and in binding shoes. So he at first made his wife and daughters his assistants, and later, when his trade expanded, sent out the uppers to farmers' and fishermen's wives, to be sewed by them in their own homes. Soon a great many women took up this occupation that afforded them remunerative employment and could be done in connection with their household tasks, and during the first half of the nineteenth century stitching and binding of shoes became exclusively woman's work. In the historical shoe town, Lynn, 1,500 women were said to be engaged in stitching and binding shoes in 1829. The poetess, Lucy Larcom, has beautifully described this early wage work of women, industrial in character and yet performed in the isolation of the home, in her pretty, touching poem, "Hannah at the Window Binding Shoes." Old reports on the wages of working women show the binding of shoes to have been a much better paid employment than the sewing trades. Twenty-five cents a pair was paid for binding shoes, and it was said that "a smart woman could bind four pairs a day." But few shoe-binders actually succeeded in binding four pairs a day. Just because it was not factory work, the majority of workers were employed in binding shoes only part of their time, in the intervals of housework, particularly as married women were employed in large numbers.

The invention and application of machinery, that began to revolutionize the manufacture of shoes at about the same time when the sewing machine began to revolutionize the clothing trades, had two distinct and opposite results. First it drove the women out of this industry, and then, after an interval of thirty years, it brought them back again in greater numbers. The first machinery ap-

plied to the manufacture of shoes did that very work that women had been doing by hand, the stitching and binding. But the machines were heavy, and to operate them required muscular strength. So men began to do what had until then been woman's work. With the introduction of machinery, the percentage of women employed in this industry steadily and rapidly declined. While in 1850 women had constituted 31 per cent. of all employees, their number sank to 23 per cent. in 1860 and to 14 per cent. in 1870. But then came a second revolution in the shoemaking trade. The machines were greatly improved and adapted to the physical strength of women. A detailed system of division of labor was introduced that divided the process of manufacture into many minute parts, and as the inevitable result of these mechanical changes woman re-entered the shoemaking industry. To-day again, as at the rise of the nineteenth century, women are binding shoes, but not like "poor, lone Hannah, sitting at the window stitching in a mournful muse." The women who to-day constitute 33 per cent. of all persons engaged in the manufacture of shoes in the United States are, all of them, factory workers. Unlike the sewing trades, the manufacture of shoes has escaped the sweatshop system. Here, as in the textile trades, we behold an industry in which the transition of women from home to factory is final and complete.

CIGAR MAKING

One of the early agricultural products of the American colonies was tobacco. Farmers raised it in their fields, and their wives performed the same function that they performed in regard to other agricultural products. They took the raw material and turned it into a commodity. The first American cigars are said to have been made by a Connecticut farmer's wife in 1801. During the early years of the nineteenth century women on the farms made practically all the domestic cigars then consumed in this country, and in many places the home-made cigar was a favorite medium of exchange. The earliest cigar factory in America was established in West Suffield, Conn., in 1810 and employed only women. Indeed, women were the sole manufacturers of cigars in the United States until skilled

male immigrants, first from Cuba and then from European countries, able to produce a better cigar than the home-made product, began to displace them. Until 1860 men dominated in the tobacco industry. Since then that same industrial transformation, founded on improved machinery and the division of labor, that brought back the woman shoemaker, has also brought back the woman cigarmaker. In 1860 women formed 9 per cent. of all persons employed in the making of cigars and cigarettes. In 1870 they formed 10 per cent; in 1880, 17 per cent.; in 1890, 28 per cent.; in 1900, 37 per cent.; and in 1905, 42 per cent. In a recent report of the Commissioner of Labor it was pointed out that in some factories women form 80 per cent. of the total number of employees, and the stogy factories of Pittsburgh employ over two thousand women and only about four hundred men. Until about twenty-five years ago the manufacture of cigars was mainly a tenement industry, with all its accompanying evils. But since then it has rapidly developed into a factory industry, and so affords another example of the transition of women from home to factory.

NEW FIELDS OF EMPLOYMENT

Closely allied with the manufacturing occupations are those branches of industry classified in the census reports under the heading: "trading and transportation." They comprise all commercial activities. Merchants, clerks, bookkeepers, salesmen and women, typewriters, telegraph and telephone operators, etc., are enumerated in this class. Flourishing industries are invariably accompanied by flourishing commerce, and the capitalistic system of production depends upon a constant expansion of trade. It is self-evident, therefore, that the number of persons engaged in commercial activities in the United States must have increased rapidly with the growth of domestic and foreign trade. But the number of women engaged in these occupations is out of all proportion with the general growth. Here we behold a striking change in the nature of woman's work, the coming of women in unprecedented numbers into a new field of employment. In 1870 only 1 per cent. of all women workers were in the class, "trade and trans-

portation." In 1900, 9 per cent. of all women workers were in this class. During one decade, from 1890 to 1900, the proportion of breadwinning women employed in trade and transportation increased 122 per cent. The following figures show the steady, enormous increase of women employed at various occupations summed up under "trade and transportation":

1880.	1890.	1900.	1910
63,058	228,421	503,347	1,202,352

When we examine various special occupations in this general division we find no less marvelous gains. In 1890 there were 8,474 telegraph and telephone operators; in 1900, 22,556; in 1910, 96,481. In 1890 there were 21,270 stenographers and typewriters; in 1900, 86,118; in 1910, 263,315. In 1890 there were 4,875 women agents; in 1900, 10,556; in 1910, 19,102. In 1890 there were 58,451 sales-women; in 1900, 149,230; in 1910, 250,438. It is obvious then that during the two decades, from 1890 to 1910, there has been an immense increase of female breadwinners in all commercial occupations. What is the explanation of this phenomenon?

We have learned that the presence of women in the manufacturing occupations was not new. Women, as we have seen, were always engaged in manufacture, and when manufacture was taken out of the home and put into the factory, women merely followed their work; they merely performed their old occupations in a new way. But it was not so in trade and transportation. The entrance of woman into the commercial world is a distinctly modern feature. While woman's work was all performed at home, women had little or no connection with trade. Commerce was a function pertaining to the larger world beyond the home and was, therefore, monopolized by men. The more recent coming of women into commercial occupations in such large and rapidly increasing numbers can only be accounted for by strong economic causes and these causes we have seen to exist. In the course of this chapter the reader has had occasion to observe that the very traditional occupations of women are the ones that are most over-crowded, in which it has become hardest for women to compete. The reader has observed that the most

womanly occupations, the sewing trades and the textile trades, were not only flooded by women but have also been invaded by men. Women did not really begin to displace men in their traditional occupations until men had invaded the traditional occupations of women. The over-crowding of those occupations that have always been regarded as woman's work brought about such deplorable conditions of endless working hours and wretched pay that to the great mass of female breadwinners it meant a choice between starvation and the seeking of new means of self-support. Irresistible economic pressure was the force that opened to women this new, great field of employment: trade and transportation. To the more educated women of the middle class it opened that other great field of employment, classified in the census as professional service. Incidentally it may be remarked that the same economic pressure also gave the greatest impetus to the movement for woman's social and political equality.

THE MODERN WOMAN'S SPHERE

When the barrier between man's work and woman's work had once been broken down, when economic necessity compelled women to seek ever new fields of employment, woman's possibilities of achievement along any line of human work had become as boundless and unlimited as man's. There is practically no occupation to-day of which it cannot be truthfully said that women can perform it. Occupations requiring great muscular strength and occupations requiring the utmost manual skill, occupations requiring a keen, active brain and occupations requiring unusual courage and daring, they all are represented by at least some women. There are women captains and pilots, engineers and firemen, carpenters and blacksmiths, machinists and well-borers. There are women doctors and lawyers, clergymen and architects, civil engineers and astronomers. Even that most recent triumph of human ingenuity and daring, aviation, already numbers women among its inventors, its pioneers and its martyrs. When we remember that at the rise of the nineteenth century some kinds of factory labor, teaching, keeping boarders, sewing and domestic service were practically the only

occupations open to women, and that to-day only a few occupations remain in which women are not yet represented, we realize what a tremendous distance we have travelled, what a profound transformation has taken place in the historically brief space of a single century. When women first became wage-workers in large numbers they still were regarded as a negligible factor. So great was the general indifference toward the women workers that even the census did not take the trouble to enumerate them separately. The early reports on manufacture merely refer to "hands employed," without telling us how many men there were and how many women. The first census that contains reliable information on the subject is that of 1860. In that year the number of working women in the United States had reached the million mark. Since then that number has steadily and rapidly increased, as the following figures show:

1880.	1890.	1900.	1910.
2,647,157	4,005,532	5,319,397	8,075,772

Woman has come into the world of affairs, and she has come to stay. With the tremendous growth of industry and commerce, with the economic and intellectual development of the nation, woman has grown and developed and has stepped forever from those narrow confines in which the economic conditions of the past maintained her. Ours is no longer a man's world, but a world of men and women. There is no public question, no social problem, that does not concern women as deeply, as vitally as men. Since man's work and woman's work have become merged in socialized industry, men and women have learned to work together, not only in the factory, the office and the store, but also in the realms of learning and on the wide arena of public life. This entirely new relation of the sexes, a relation of comradeship and co-operation, is one of the greatest gains to humanity brought about by the industrial revolution.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AWAKENED

The powerful influence of environment is a social factor that is generally recognized to-day. We know that heredity

plays an important part in the shaping of mind and character; but we also know that the influence of heredity can be offset and counteracted by the influence of environment. When we change the environment of a child, his body, mind and character, his whole future life is bound to be changed thereby for good or evil. Even in adult life a person's habits and mode of thinking may still be vitally modified by a changed environment. Being aware of the influence of environment in the lives of individuals, we can realize how great the influence of a changed environment must be when an entire section of the population is affected by it. When people, accustomed to isolated lives, are brought into daily intercourse with one another and with other people, when their work, until then performed along traditional lines, is suddenly performed in new and unaccustomed ways, when their interests, until then strictly personal, are thrust forward to mingle with social interests, a revolution in the thoughts and habits of these people is bound to follow.

Such a complete change of environment is what happened to womankind since the close of the eighteenth and the rise of the nineteenth century, when industry ceased to be a domestic function and became a social function, when the home as a workshop was superseded by the factory. Until that great industrial transformation took place, the overwhelming majority of women led isolated and intensely personal lives. Every girl grew up with the idea that marriage and the service of a family was her only destiny in life. The training of her mind was utterly neglected, but her hands were trained early to the performance of domestic tasks. She worked at her mother's side in her father's home until the time of her marriage, the only great event in her uneventful life, and then she went to work in her husband's home, assisted perhaps by a hired woman and later by her own daughters. The character of her work was such that it required all her time and strength and left her little or no leisure for outside interests. So the four walls of her home confined not only her body but her mind as well. But when woman began to work outside the home, when the performance of her daily task caused her to mingle with other women and with men, when she became a factor in the wonderful

mechanism of socialized production, her interests expanded like her workshop; her mind grew and developed like the industries that she performed; her relation to society changed like the tools she employed. Slowly but inevitably she developed a social spirit that had been foreign to her home-bound ancestors.

The woman who had served only her family, who had worked and sacrificed and suffered only for her family, who had spent her entire life in the midst of her family, could rarely conceive of any higher, more important social unit than the family. To her the little group of blood relations had been the world. But the woman who became socially productive gradually felt herself to be part of a larger social group. She began to perceive that those who worked with her at the same occupation, who earned their bread in the same way as she, had interests that were identical with hers. She began to realize—vaguely at first, but more clearly as the number of wage-earning women increased—that alone she was weak and helpless, but that as a member of her class, the working class, she could command attention and wield power. So working women came into the labor movement at a time when there was as yet no organized woman movement. Years before middle class women began to struggle for woman's right to a higher education, her right to learn and practice the liberal professions, her right to equality before the law and, finally, her right to political equality, working women were struggling for a living wage, a reasonable working day, and decent conditions of toil. As a natural result of her social environment and her economic needs, the working woman's class consciousness was awakened long before her sex consciousness.

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

When women first became wage-workers, the advantages offered by their new position outweighed the disadvantages. We have seen that many of the pioneer women workers in Lowell and other early New England mill towns were intelligent, ambitious girls, to whom factory labor meant a first opportunity for a larger existence. Most of them came from small villages or isolated farms,

and the mill town was a revelation of new experiences and a new interest in life. For the first time they experienced the joy of companionship at work and during leisure hours, the joy of common interests, common pleasures, common ambitions, in a larger social group than the family. For the first time their mental faculties were aroused and stimulated by public libraries, lecture courses and literary clubs. For the first time—and this is the vital factor in the changed environment of women—they knew the meaning of economic independence. William Hard sums up the situation in the words: "Two documents of worth has woman won—the college diploma and the pay envelope." The college diploma naturally remained confined to a comparatively small group of women; but the pay envelope has become the well-earned document of worth of increasing millions. Such a striking difference did the pay envelope make in the position of women that people only began to notice that women were working after the women began to be paid for their work. "My wife doesn't work," a union printer, enjoying an eight-hour day, once said to me. What he meant was: "My wife doesn't receive any wages for her work." He was so accustomed to estimate work only in its relation to wages, that he did not realize that his wife, in her five-room apartment, with her three, small children, was working far harder and longer than he in his shop. Yet such was the general attitude toward woman's work while it remained unremunerated. Only when woman's work attained a marketable value did men begin to compare it with their own. What a difference the pay envelope made to the woman herself, how it gave her self-reliance and self-respect, cannot be understood by men unless they are able, mentally, to place themselves in the woman's position. Let a man work for an employer for just his board and lodging, and let him beg that employer for a few dollars every time he needs a new suit or a pair of new shoes, and he may be able to appreciate the difference the pay envelope has made to women.

EVILS OF FACTORY LABOR

A larger social life, intellectual opportunities and economic independence, these were the three inestimable ad-

vantages factory labor gave to women. But hand in hand with its advantages came the evils, evils that have persisted throughout the development of modern industry, until to-day they are recognized to be among the greatest of our social problems. Long hours, poor ventilation, dangerous machinery, the handling of poisonous substances, continuous standing, the nervous strain of speeding and other evils of factory labor have affected both men and women. But they have affected women to a greater degree than men, because women are physically weaker than men and because motherhood is the natural, unalterable portion of womanhood. When work, not adapted to a woman's strength, has a detrimental influence upon her health, it is not only an injury to her as an individual, it is also an even greater injury to her as a potential mother and to her unborn children. Every physician who has patients among factory workers knows from personal experience in how many respects factory labor is injurious to the maternal functions of women. It was even more injurious at a time when there was no protective legislation limiting the hours of work or regulating the conditions under which it was performed. Although these conditions were favorable at first, owing to the simple reason that the employers had to make them favorable in order to obtain a sufficient number of workers, they soon deteriorated when the supply of available labor power increased.

Many of the evils were manifest at an early date, while poets and economists still sang the praises of the young factory towns, and the working girls themselves were prone to dwell upon the sunny sides of factory life only. As I have stated in the previous chapter, the female operatives of the early mills were usually housed in company boarding houses. The original purpose of these boarding houses had been to offer an added inducement to girls from villages and farms, by surrounding them with a home-like atmosphere. But soon they became a means for exploitation. In most instances girls were compelled to live in them, whether they wished to or not. To make the houses pay they were overcrowded, and the food the workers received was of poor quality and often insufficient. One early account from an operatives' magazine describes the bedrooms of a

corporation boarding house as being "absolutely choked with beds, trunks, bandboxes, clothes, umbrellas and people; that one finds it difficult to stir, even to breathe freely."

Poor ventilation was an evil complained of in both the boarding houses and the factories themselves. In 1849 a physician, Dr. Curtis, published an investigation of hygienic conditions in Lowell in which he stated, among other things, that bad ventilation in the mills was the chief cause of deteriorated health among the mill hands. As early as 1836 other physicians pointed out the connection between factory labor and tuberculosis. Edith Abbott, in the seventh chapter of "Women in Industry," gives the following account of the early mills: "They were for the most part narrow and extremely high buildings, sometimes with seven stories; they were low-studded, heated by stoves, badly ventilated and badly lighted. Weavers depended on the old 'petticoat lamps,' as they were called, which were fastened to the loom and filled with whale-oil, to be ready when the light failed. Moreover slight attention was given to apparatus for removing the fine dust, which is so unhealthful in cotton mills, or to any artificial means of ventilation."

The excesses of corporation control were another and even more evident evil. The working girl was not only compelled to live in a corporation boarding house, she was also obliged to trade at a corporation store and to support a corporation church. Hours were notoriously long in the early mills. It was a common occurrence that work was begun before breakfast and continued after supper. In fact, the fourteen-hour system was in general use during the first half of the nineteenth century, and not infrequently overtime work was insisted upon without extra pay. Wages of women were always low and were always strikingly lower than men's. Our earliest authentic information on that subject dates from the year 1833, when the actual relation between the wages of men and women was said to be as 4 to 1; that is, a woman could earn only 25 cents for the same kind of work for which a man earned a dollar. At about the same time it was stated in Philadelphia that "women do not

receive as much wages for an entire week's work of 13 to 14 hours per day, as journeymen receive in the same branches for a single day of ten hours."

THE EARLY WOMEN WORKERS

It is evident that glaring evils of factory life existed from the beginning, and that in many respects conditions were much worse than at present, especially for the women. The wage-earning woman, in the early days of the factories, stood unprotected by law, her problems ignored or disregarded by society. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, that she learn to protect herself, that she learn to employ those infallible weapons that have ever given strength to the weak: co-operation and organization. Yet the wage-earning woman was slow to learn. Though all the evils of her new environment pointed to the need of co-operation and organization, this tendency was continually repressed by the influences of her former environment, her education, her traditions. The factory, with its complicated machinery, its many workers, its organized system of production, was a strange, bewildering place to the inexperienced, timid girls who had been transplanted there from quiet, rural homesteads. All matters not pertaining to the home were utterly foreign to them. They could not analyze nor even understand their own problems. Moreover they had little power of resistance, as a result of the age-long oppression of their sex. The daughters of generations of subjected mothers cannot at once rise to a high level of independence and self-assertion. The ability to assert their own rights can only be gradually cultivated by the experience of freedom. Therefore we still find that hard and unfair industrial conditions are far more readily accepted by women than by men. This natural meekness of the subjected sex was, of course, even more in evidence when women first came into industry. The early women workers had been so accustomed to obedience at home, that obedience to the rules of their employers seemed natural. If the conditions of their toil were hard, if long hours of incessant labor and insanitary workrooms left them pale and weak, they did not complain. They accepted the evils as an inevitable

portion of their new surroundings, and showed their employers and overseers that same docility and submissiveness that they had been accustomed to show their fathers, brothers and husbands; that same docility and submissiveness that they had been taught to cultivate as an essential, womanly virtue.

But there were other and even stronger reasons than their innate submissiveness that prevented the early women workers from endeavoring to better their condition by any organized effort. These reasons were: their middle class character, their extreme youth, and the very temporary nature of their employment. The factory girls of the early nineteenth century were not working girls in the modern sense of the term. In fact, while most men were successfully employed in agriculture and the great mass of women were successfully employed at home, there was no clearly defined working class. The pioneer women workers came from the middle class. They were the daughters of farmers and professional men, and it sometimes happened that their fathers or other male relatives or friends owned stock in the very mills in which they worked. It would have been unnatural for these girls to antagonize the class from which they had sprung, among which they had their friends and associates, and to which they expected to return, particularly after marriage. There were some mature women among the early mill workers, but the overwhelming majority were extremely young. No child labor laws existed in those days, and so we find many little girls entering the mills at ten, at nine and even at eight years of age. Not one of the pioneer women in industry remained at factory work for the greater part of her life. To practically all the factory was only an episode in life; to many only a brief episode.

Very young girls from small towns and from the country, healthy, light-hearted and ambitious, with parental homes to return to and with prospects of early marriage—such was the type of mill girls before the rapid increase of population produced a permanent class of wage-workers. It is not surprising that organization and concerted action for the purpose of improving conditions were practically impossible among this type of workers. But notwith-

standing all these repressive influences, there were occasional rebellions even here. Although the girls calmly accepted the general conditions as they found them, particularly flagrant wrongs and exploitations called forth their spontaneous opposition and led to the first struggles between them and their employers. These struggles were confused and unorganized, they did not lead to any permanent organization, and the results they achieved were few and insignificant. But they did show dormant qualities in the meek, gentle sex that amazed the conservative contemporaries of those early rebels. They showed women to be capable of fighting their own battles, capable of courage, endurance and loyalty in the service of a common cause.

FIRST STRUGGLES

One of the first "turn-outs" or "flare-ups," as strikes were then called, of which we have a record, occurred at Dover, N. H., in 1828. It was caused by the introduction of obnoxious factory regulations. These regulations contained, among other things, the hint at a black list, to be used against employees who had failed to give satisfaction, and this particular provision was regarded by the girls as an insult to their self-respect. Acting upon the spur of the moment, over three hundred of them marched out of the factory in a body, and paraded the streets of the town to demonstrate their unity and their determination. Their cause was lost; but their action created widespread newspaper comment, mostly in the form of ridicule. One Philadelphia paper contained the following comment: "The late strike and grand public march of the female operatives in New Hampshire exhibit the Yankee sex in a new and unexpected light. By and by the governor may have to call out the militia to prevent a gynecocracy." The writer of that supposedly humorous remark could not surmise how truthfully he prophesied. The militia has often been called out since to subdue both men and women who were striking for their bread.

Another interesting flare-up occurred in famous Lowell in 1836. In October of that year the largest company in Lowell had decided upon a considerable reduction in

wages. When the girls learned of this decision at their work they left their looms and spindles and stood together in little, anxious groups, discussing this new problem that was facing them. One girl, bolder and more enterprising than the rest, suggested their walking out, and not resuming work until the old wage scale had been re-established. Her courage and energy roused the others to action, and in a very short while 1,500 girls marched out of the mills. Through the streets of Lowell they marched, arm in arm, singing songs in chorus. The songs they sang were not revolutionary nor appropriate even; but the marching and the singing in themselves were an expression of freedom and self-reliance, an expression of the knowledge of strength that comes with union. The girls marched to the summit of a hill where some of their male fellow workers addressed them. Then it was that something extraordinary occurred: A little slip of a girl—her name has been forgotten—carried away by the enthusiasm of the occasion, set aside all established decorum, and climbing upon a pump, began to address her fellow workers in her turn, telling them to hold out for their rights. Most of her hearers were more shocked than pleased, for it was an unheard of thing in Lowell, with its deeply rooted New England prejudices, for a woman to speak in public. The Lowell mill girls remained out for several weeks, but then they returned, one by one, and accepted the reduced wages, defeated, "almost starved out," as a New York newspaper reported it.

It is a noteworthy fact that all the early strikes and the first attempts of women workers to organize industrially were met with ridicule and contempt by the general public. The same arguments that have since been used against the suffragists were used against the working women who dared to strike or organize. That industrial organization would unsex women was claimed as earnestly and as vehemently, as some persons claim even to-day that the ballot would unsex them. Strike leaders and agitators among working women became objects of the cheapest ridicule, and press and pulpit combined in discouraging the women and exhorting them to submission. Only the few labor papers then in existence formed a praiseworthy exception. Although the great majority of workingmen

still failed to see the identity of interests between themselves and the women workers, organized workingmen in their unions and by means of their press never failed to give help and encouragement to their sisters in the hour of need.

BEGINNINGS OF ORGANIZATION

The earliest protective organization of women reported was that of the New York tailoresses in 1825. That women should organize at all caused the usual, unfavorable newspaper comment, and one paper expressed the general surprise in its editorial exclamation: "What next?" Little more was heard from the New York needlewomen for the next few years. But in 1831 a surprisingly large number, 1,600 of them, struck against the starvation wages that had driven them to the limit of human endurance. We have seen that the needlewomen were subjected to most deplorable conditions from the very beginning, owing to the terrible overcrowding of their trade. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should be among the first to recognize the value of organization. They accomplished little by their first strike. There were too many unorganized women waiting to take the strikers' places. But their struggle differed in one respect from the other flare-ups and walk-outs of that period, inasmuch as they succeeded in arousing some public sympathy in their behalf. It was that same kind of public sympathy to which Upton Sinclair referred in commenting upon the great success of his "Jungle," when he said: "I had meant to strike the public's heart, but instead I struck its stomach." The public sympathy with the starving needlewomen of 1831 mainly sprang from an awakening recognition of the dangers of sweatshop manufacture, for already it had been shown that garments produced under foul and filthy conditions, in quarters not fit for human habitation, were likely to carry disease and death into the homes of the well-to-do.

One of the most interesting organizations of this period was that of the shoe binders of Lynn, formed in 1833. It offers one of the first examples of a trade union consisting entirely of women and organized and conducted by the

women themselves. I have pointed out how at this particular period most processes of shoe manufacture had already been transferred to the factory, while the binding of shoes was still carried on under the old, domestic system. The sewing machine had not yet been invented, so shoes had to be bound by hand, and shoe binding was exclusively woman's work, done by the women in their own homes, often in connection with housework. Practically all the women of Lynn and the neighboring towns, who were employed at remunerative work at all, were engaged in binding shoes. At first wages had been higher than in other branches of woman's work, but with increasing competition among the workers wages had been reduced, until they had finally reached a level that made self-support practically impossible. It was then that the women shoe binders of Lynn were roused to a sense of their common grievances and proceeded to organize.

On the thirtieth day of December, 1833, about one thousand of them met in the Friends' Meetinghouse in Lynn, organized themselves into a trade union, adopted the rather pompous name, "Female Society of Lynn and Vicinity for the Protection and Promotion of Female Industry," drew up a constitution, elected their officers, and presented their demands to the employers. The concerted action of these women was all the more remarkable because they were not factory workers. They all toiled in the isolation of their own homes and had, therefore, never experienced that community of interests that springs from the daily intercourse with one's fellow workers. Their common need was the only force that brought them together, but it proved sufficiently strong. For several months the new organization fought for the recognition of its demands. It was faithfully supported by the Men's Cordwainer's Union. The men appointed a committee to solicit funds to aid the ladies' society, and resolved that after a certain date they would not work for any shoe manufacturer who refused to comply with the demands of the women shoe binders. So the industrial struggle of that early woman's trade union was led to victory. The shoe binders won practically all their demands and obtained a better standard of living for themselves and their families. But their very success proved their undoing. Women were still too in-

experienced on the field of trade unionism to maintain an organization after the need for immediate action had passed, and so the Female Society of Lynn gradually went to pieces.

LABOR REFORM ASSOCIATIONS

In 1845 a convention of workers was called that led to the formation of the "New England Workingmen's Association." Women participated in this organization throughout its existence, and the first convention was attended by a woman who came as a regular delegate, representing three hundred working women of Lowell. This woman was Sarah G. Bagley, the first woman organizer and public agitator among working women, as truly a pioneer of the woman's cause as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Sarah G. Bagley had been a simple worker in cotton mills for ten successive years of her life. She knew the needs and problems of working women, not from abstract reasoning or sympathetic observation, but from profound, personal experience. Being able to recognize her own struggles as the struggles of her class, she understood the value of co-operation and organization, and, therefore, became a leader among her associates. She was the founder of an organization of women factory operatives, and was later chosen its president. As the representative of this organization, she attended the workingmen's convention of 1845 and participated in its deliberations. At that time there still existed widespread prejudice against the public activity of women. Even among educated women of the middle class it required an unusual amount of moral courage to brave the public odium. How much greater must the mental strength to brave all this prejudice have been in the case of a plain working girl, who had nothing to uphold her in her chosen course but her own recognition that her cause was just.

The Female Labor Reform Association of Lowell, the organization Sarah G. Bagley represented, aimed to improve the condition of women workers by bringing their needs before the public and rousing the public conscience in their behalf. Organizations by the same name, similar to the Lowell association, were organized in Manchester,

Dover, Fall River and New York. They consisted mainly of working women, but many broad-minded middle class women, particularly pioneers of the suffrage movement, became interested in these organizations and loyally supported them.

The New York association was organized during March of 1845. Despite public discouragement and newspaper ridicule, it was launched with a membership of several hundred women. Among them were tailoresses, shirt makers, cap makers, straw workers, book folders, lace makers, etc. The association did not accomplish much in the way of actual reform, but it certainly did call public attention to the wretched conditions under which women of this city toiled, and it did teach the women themselves that, although laboring at different occupations, they had common grievances and common aims. The public attitude of the time was clearly reflected in the following report of that organization meeting, taken from the New York Herald: "About seven hundred females, generally of the most interesting age and appearance, were assembled." That these women were organizing to improve their lot seems to have been unimportant from the reporter's and the average reader's point of view. That they were females and females of an interesting age and appearance was regarded as the most noteworthy feature of their meeting. Such was the disgusting sex prejudice by which working women and middle class women alike were confronted.

THE FIGHT FOR THE TEN HOUR DAY

By far the most important activity of these "Female Labor Reform Associations" was the beginning of an agitation for a ten-hour day, carried on jointly with organized workingmen. The Lowell association secured thousands of signatures of factory operatives of both sexes to a petition addressed to the legislature for a ten-hour day, and a committee of working girls, led by the courageous Sarah G. Bagley, went before the Massachusetts legislative committee and testified as to conditions in the textile mills. This was the first time that working women sought protection directly from the lawmakers of one of

our States, and the wise action of these pioneers led to the first American governmental examination of labor conditions. Since that first investigation, compelled by the working women themselves, Massachusetts takes the lead in protective legislation.

With this event of historic importance, an amusing little incident is connected that appears strikingly modern. The chairman of the legislative committee, before whom the committee of working girls testified, happened to be the representative in the Legislature from the Lowell district, and should, therefore, have shown special interest in the complaints of his fellow townspeople. Instead he made light of their appeal, treated them in a high-handed manner, and withheld from the Legislature some of the most important facts presented by the delegation. The working girls were indignant, and they voiced their indignation not merely by words but by deeds. Before the elections of that year, when the legislator from Lowell was again running for office, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association published the following resolution: "Resolved that the Female Labor Reform Association deeply deplore the lack of independence, honesty and humanity in the committee to whom were referred sundry petitions relative to the hours of labor, especially in the chairman of that committee; and as he is merely a corporation machine or tool, we will use our best endeavors and influence to keep him in the 'City of Spindles,' where he belongs, and not trouble Boston folks with him." How successful the "best endeavors" of the working girls must have been is evident from a second resolution, published by them shortly after Election Day. It read: "Resolved, that the members of this association tender their grateful acknowledgement to the voters of Lowell for consigning William Schouler (chairman of the legislative committee) to the obscurity he so justly deserves." For once woman's indirect influence had proved sufficient. Present-day suffragettes could do no better in promptly punishing one of their enemies.

Active agitation for a ten-hour day was also carried on by the Female Labor Reform Associations of Manchester, Dover and Fall River, but the greatest battles for the

ten-hour day and for other important labor reforms were fought by the working women of Pittsburgh. Mr. John B. Andrews, in the volume on "History of Women in Trade Unions," published by the government as part of the general report on "Woman and Child Wage Earners in the United States," gives the following description of those severe struggles of Pittsburgh factory women: "It is doubtful if women workers have ever engaged in more bitterly contested strikes than those around Pittsburgh in 1848. It was the culmination of six long years of struggle to secure adequate wages, reasonable hours and fair conditions. In the early forties these women had gone on strike for higher wages and the abolition of the store order system. In 1843 they protested unsuccessfully against an increase in the number of hours of labor without an increase in wages. In 1844 they struck against a reduction in pay. In 1845 they abandoned the attempt to regulate their wages, and united on an attempt to secure the ten-hour day. When starved back to work on the twelve-hour system, they secured a promise from their employers that no objection would be raised against a continuance of the ten-hour agitation, and that when employers elsewhere adopted the ten-hour system the Pittsburgh manufacturers would do likewise."

Having obtained this promise, the working women of Pittsburgh proceeded to inaugurate what was a new departure in the American labor movement. They carried their agitation beyond their city and beyond the boundaries of their State, and combined with the working women of New England factory towns in a concerted effort to win the ten-hour day. The New England women responded eagerly to the call of their Pittsburgh sisters, and together they drew up a document that they very appropriately called their Declaration of Independence, resolving not to work more than ten hours daily after July 4, 1846. The result of all this agitation was that several States enacted ten-hour laws. New Hampshire took the lead in 1847. Pennsylvania followed in 1848, and New Jersey in 1851. Unfortunately these laws were not framed by working men and women, but by representatives of the employing class, and so each of them contained a saving clause—saving for the employers. This

clause permitted longer hours by special contract. Of course employers at once saw their advantage and before the laws went into effect compelled their employees to sign special contracts, pledging themselves to work twelve hours as before. Countless strikes were precipitated to enforce the ten-hour law, but labor was not yet prepared to take up the unequal fight with capital and so the cause was temporarily lost. But these great struggles in which women participated so prominently were a powerful factor in arousing them to class consciousness, and in educating them to an understanding of their own position.

TRADE UNIONISTS AND SUFFRAGISTS

Women's Trade Unions, in separate locals in the principal industrial centers, began to be formed by 1860. Such unions existed among cigar makers, tailoresses, seamstresses, umbrella sewers, cap makers, textile workers, printers, burnishers, laundry workers and shoe workers. Most of these organizations were called into existence under special stress, usually at times of strikes, and went to pieces again when there was no special need for action. Of the national trade unions only two, the printers and the cigarmakers, admitted women to membership, but women shoe makers had a national trade union of their own, the first national women's trade union in the United States, known as the Daughters of St. Crispin. State unions of women were formed in New York and Massachusetts. Two important strikes, involving large numbers of women, occurred at this time—that of the shoe workers of Lynn in 1860, and that of the Troy laundry workers in 1869. The Lynn strike led to a compromise with the manufacturers, and to the formation of a union. The Troy strike, though enlisting general public sympathy, was crushed by the combined efforts of employers. Organized workingmen liberally supported the women in both these strikes. During this period the American labor movement had for its central body the National Labor Union that brought together representatives of organized trades in a series of annual congresses. To these congresses women were freely admitted as delegates, and the formation of women's unions was consistently encouraged.

The question of the political rights of women began to command public attention at that time, and also came up for discussion at these deliberative assemblies of workers; but it met with little understanding and a great deal of opposition. At its annual convention of 1866 the National Labor Union absolutely barred the discussion of woman suffrage. Two years later, at the convention of 1868, a special committee on female labor was appointed to draw up a resolution. Two pioneer suffragists, Susan B. Anthony and Mary Kellogg Putnam, served on this committee. The resolution presented to the convention read as follows: "Resolved, that the low wages, long hours and damaging service to which women are doomed, destroy health, imperil virtue, and are a standing reproach to civilization; that we urge them to learn trades, engage in business, join our labor unions or form protective unions of their own, **secure the ballot**, and use any other honorable means to persuade or force employers to do justice to women by giving them equal pay for equal work." This resolution was adopted by the congress only after the obnoxious words, "secure the ballot," had been stricken out. To this same congress the Woman's Suffrage Association of America had sent Elizabeth Cady Stanton as a fraternal delegate. There was much wrangling over the question of whether or not she ought to be admitted. The question was finally decided in her favor after the adoption of the following resolution: "The National Labor Congress does not regard itself as indorsing her peculiar ideas, or committing itself to her position on female suffrage." A first attempt to bring working women into the suffrage movement was made in the same year, when leading suffragists organized the Working Women's Association of New York. The founders of this association declared that it was their aim to bring together in one organization various groups of women all working for the improvement of their condition. It was a well meant undertaking, but failed in its purpose, as the Working Women's Association turned out to be a middle class affair. One by one the delegates from the trade unions dropped out, and when asked why they failed to support an organization that stood for their own interests, one of them gave as their reason that working women wanted "not the ballot, but

bread." The fact was that working women had not yet learned to see the connection between the ballot and bread.

KNIGHTS OF LABOR

Woman's position in the American labor movement became more firmly established with the formation of the Knights of Labor in 1869. This organization, begun as a secret society like that of the Masons, gradually developed into a powerful, national federation of the working class. From its beginning it stood for the admission of women on equal terms with men. In the preamble to its constitution, adopted at the first national convention in 1878, was set down as one of its principal objects, "to secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work." After the convention of 1881 women began to enter the organization in great numbers. In 1885 a department of woman's work was created, and at the annual convention of the following year the sixteen women delegates present were appointed a permanent committee to investigate the conditions of working women.

A woman of rare ability and splendid devotion to the cause of her class, Leonora M. Barry, was elected general investigator. Leonora M. Barry, like Sarah G. Bagley of an earlier date, was one of those exceptional personalities who are representative of an entire movement, in whose life and work the struggles, hopes and aims of many thousands are recorded. Mr. John B. Andrews, in the "History of Women in Trade Unions," gives us the following brief description of Leonora Barry's life before she came into the labor movement. "In 1879 she was left a young widow with three children, the baby less than a year old. Her eyesight failed, and she had to give up dressmaking. She went into a hosiery mill in Amsterdam, N. Y. The first day she earned 11 cents; the first week 65 cents. She was somewhat disturbed by conditions as she found them. She was particularly incensed by the insults to which she found young girls were obliged to submit in order to hold their jobs. Then she heard for the first time of the Knights of Labor. She was attracted by the equal pay for equal work

slogan, and threw herself into the movement." As general investigator for the Knights of Labor, Mrs. Barry immediately began to examine the conditions of sewing women and of women factory workers, but she was hampered in her work by the absence of official authority that prevented her from entering any establishments whose owners objected to her investigations. At that time, moreover, national and state labor bureaus were coming into existence, which made private investigation less important. Mrs. Barry, therefore, turned all her energy to that field of service for which she was best qualified: agitation and organization. As the official representative of the Knights of Labor, she travelled about the country, arousing and organizing the women workers. She addressed hundreds of meetings, she formed dozens of new women's locals, and instilled new life into those already in existence. She inaugurated an educational campaign through a widespread distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, and her annual reports contained valuable suggestions and recommendations, derived from her close, personal observations. For four years she gave her undivided strength and ability to her work. Then a second marriage unfortunately took her from the field of social service, and the work she had created and conducted passed with her into history. We can no longer point to actual results of Mrs. Barry's labors, but we may be certain that many of the seeds she has sown have cast root and grown, and are bearing fruit for the present-day labor movement. Leonora M. Barry was the direct, spiritual predecessor of our own Leonora O'Reilly, Rose Schneidermann, Agnes Nestor, and the many other modern working girls who have risen from the ranks to become leaders among their fellow workers.

With the founding of the American Federation of Labor began the present era of the labor movement. This association, like the Knights of Labor, always encouraged the organization of women, and expressed this attitude in a resolution at its first convention in 1885. In 1891 a committee on women's work was appointed, with women acting as chairman and secretary. The committee recommended the appointment of a national woman organizer. This recommendation was carried out in 1900, and the national woman organizer was also made assistant editor of

the Federationist, the official organ of the American Federation of Labor.

WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE

One of the most potent factors in the present-day labor movement, not only in organizing working women, but also in educating them to an understanding of their needs and to a consciousness of duties and responsibilities in public life, is the Women's Trade Union League. Founded in 1903 for the purpose of uniting in one general organization working women and sympathizers of other classes, it has steadily grown in numbers and in influence until to-day it comprises nine local leagues in leading cities, with national headquarters in Chicago. The biennial national conventions, held in Boston, New York and St. Louis, aroused widespread interest in the condition of women workers among the general public and interest in trade-unionism among the workers themselves. It is a movement for and by working women, one that proves that working women have learned the lesson of co-operation and have evolved the social spirit to a marked degree. The main principles that the league stands for are: organization of all workers into trade unions; equal pay for equal work; the eight-hour day, a minimum wage scale, and woman suffrage. The league not only indorses woman suffrage, it also carries on an active agitation in its behalf by participation in all suffrage demonstrations and through the columns of its official organ, *Life and Labor*. During the 1915 suffrage campaign in New York State the Women's Trade Union League issued a burning appeal to the organized workingmen of that state, calling upon them to work and vote for the suffrage amendment. So completely have working women changed their attitude toward the suffrage question during forty years, since the days when a trade union delegate declared that working women wanted, "not the ballot but bread."

The modern, enlightened working woman, deeply conscious of a bond of solidarity between herself and her fellow workers, keenly interested in the great, social problems of the hour, and fully aware of the connection between public life and her own personal needs, is the fore-

runner of a coming age, as the intelligent, ambitious, middle class mill girl of the early nineteenth century was a forerunner of present-day womanhood. She has assimilated the new ideas that the pioneers of a century ago just barely conceived. She has fully adapted herself to woman's new environment, and stands prepared to take a leading part in coming struggles for justice and freedom, in behalf of her sex, as well as in behalf of her class. For the modern, enlightened working woman is representative of the two greatest movements of modern times, the labor movement and the woman movement. As a woman, she demands social and political equality. As a worker, she demands economic justice. While her share in the labor movement has steadily increased, from the first, ephemeral flare-ups of the early days to the thoroughly organized methods and actions of the present time, she has become a factor of increasing importance in the woman movement also. Until within recent years the woman movement was almost exclusively conducted by women of the middle class, but now it is fast gaining adherents among the workers, because the workers are beginning to understand that the ballot is as important a means of self-protection as the trade union, and that while they are learning to use the one they must strive to win the other. Anti-suffragists have abandoned the argument that working women do not wish the additional burden of the vote, and suffragists have learned to dwell far more upon the needs of working women than upon the grievances of taxpayers. Practically all advocates of woman suffrage are agreed that the working woman is in even greater need of the ballot than the woman of leisure, and that the introduction of woman suffrage is an important step in improving the condition of the working class. Most promising of all—the workingmen also have come to recognize that industrial organization and political action are as important to their female fellow workers as to themselves. While the women in industry have undergone a transformation in their relation to society, the men in industry have undergone an equally great transformation in their relation to the women.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE WOMAN MOVEMENT

The attitude of workingmen toward working women has been one of rapid evolution from indifference over opposition and misunderstanding to recognition and co-operation. In the early days of the labor movement, the presence of women was more or less ignored. They were working mainly at occupations not yet sought by men, as in the textile trades, or they were performing some simple part of a manufacturing process in which the skilled and well-paid parts were performed by men, as in the making of shoes. But when men and women began to compete for the same jobs in the same trades, when women began to displace men in some trades owing to the cheapness of their labor power, and began to enter others as strike breakers, the ire of the men was roused, not against industrial conditions but against the women. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, and particularly in those trades in which competition between the sexes was keenest, we, therefore, find many concerted efforts on the part of workingmen to oust the women from their occupations.

At a convention of the National Trades Union in 1835 the following resolution was adopted: "We recommend that the workingmen oppose by all honest means the multiplying of all descriptions of labor for females, inasmuch as the competition it creates with the males tends inevitably to impoverish both." In 1819 the journeymen tailors of New York struck to prevent the employment of women. This incident is particularly interesting because it furnishes an example of men trying to drive women out of a traditional woman's occupation. In 1835 the Boston printers struck against the employment of women as compositors, and Philadelphia printers struck for the same purpose even twenty years later. As late as 1877 we find cigarmakers of Cincinnati united in a final effort to drive the women from their trade. They succeeded temporarily, for after the settlement of their victorious strike all women were discharged from the shops. But still the women

kept coming back into the trade, and finally men accepted the situation as inevitable, and began to admit women into their organizations. This same course of events repeated itself in many places and in various trades.

The strike-breaking and wage lowering of women at first caused men to regard the women in industry as enemies. But when all attempts to keep women out of industry proved unsuccessful, when it became evident that the female wage-worker was as truly a factor of modern, socialized industry as the machine, workingmen gradually perceived that working women remained their enemies only so long as they were excluded from their organizations, and were compelled to accept lower wages and inferior conditions. To raise the woman's standards, to teach her the value of co-operation, to make her a trustworthy comrade, thereupon became the object of all enlightened, organized workingmen. At present it is the generally accepted policy of organized labor to organize women and to co-operate with them under all circumstances, to teach them the purpose and meaning of trade unionism, and either to bring them into existing unions or to encourage the formation of their own organizations.

Having recognized the woman's need for industrial equality, it was only the next, logical step to recognize her need for political equality. Therefore, we find labor organizations throughout the country indorsing woman suffrage and lending the suffrage movement their active support. Therefore, we find the Socialist Party, the great, political organization of the working class, setting forth woman suffrage as one of its chief, present-day demands, and conducting a nation-wide campaign in its behalf. While forty-five years ago a congress of workingmen passed a resolution, declaring that it would not commit itself to the "peculiar ideas" of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, present day congresses of workingmen everywhere are passing resolutions in support of those same ideas. Suffragists know that when they go before a body of workingmen they are sure to meet with far more understanding and sympathy than they usually meet with among men of other classes. Within recent years no labor leader has been known to express such antediluvian views on the

woman question as have been expressed by some leading statesmen, educators and scientists.

The mutual relation of men and women in industry has been such that they were bound to understand each other's needs. The man who works in a factory side by side with women, who sees them driven by foremen, and knows that they depend upon the toil of their hands, like him, will not prate idly about the weakness of woman, the chivalry of men, and the home being woman's place, like the man who only associates with well-to-do women, not obliged to earn their bread.

Historically, too, there is a powerful link between workingmen and women, because the women and the male workers of the world have borne a common lot through the ages. The women and the workers have always supplied the material wants of society, and have always been exploited and oppressed. Therefore, it is not mere chance, but an inevitable result of social and industrial evolution that the workers and the women awoke to a consciousness of their wrongs almost simultaneously, that the labor movement and the woman movement began at about the same time. At present the labor movement and the woman movement are developing side by side in every country where the industrial revolution has been accomplished, and in many respects they are closely linked. Hand in hand, the oppressed class and the subjected sex are arising from bondage, and hand in hand they will go on to full recognition in human society, to the making of a better, juster, happier, more humane civilization.

THE END.



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